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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Thursday, February 24, 1938

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "IT'S A CHEESE THEY HAVE IN THE ARMY." Information from the Bureau of Dairy Industry, United States Department of Agriculture.

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Friends, my latest Washington news letter reminds me of the good old ditty, "It's a way they have in the A-army!" Only I keep wanting to say, "It's a cheese they have in the A-ar-rmy!" because this Washington letter is all about some canned cheese the Army has purchased. They're going to send the cheese to their Philippine Islands Department, and later will be sending some to Hawaii and Panama.

It seems the Army has been cooperating with the Bureau of Dairy Industry of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, where this particular way of putting up cheese was worked out. The Army found the canned cheese was highly popular at various posts, so decided to include it on the list of provision for the commissary department.

It strikes me that when all the hundreds of people in the Army and at the Army posts begin to use this new style cheese package, the demand for it will grow, and soon you and I wherever we live, will be able to buy it, too. That's what happened in the case of Navy butter. Perhaps you never heard of Navy butter. But about 25 years ago, the Government dairy specialists and the Navy Department cooperated in an experiment to try out butter made from sweet pasteurized cream instead of sour cream. It was made expressly for the Navy to use, but people who tasted it became interested in getting "Navy" butter for themselves. Today a large percentage of all butter sold commercially is sweet cream butter.

According to my news letter, H. L. Wilson, cheese manufacturing specialist for the Bureau of Dairy Industry, says that natural cheddar cheese is now being canned by two companies on the West Coast and one in Wisconsin, and is available to the retail trade in many of the larger cities throughout the country. Reports indicate that more than 800,000 pounds of it will be made this year. Canned cheese was first made and sold commercially about 4 years ago, but Bureau scientists have been working for about 10 years with the problem of merchandizing "natural" American Cheddar cheese in consumer-size packages instead of the big round flat cheeses you see in the grocery store.

The new style package of canned cheese is the same "natural" cheese you have always meant when you asked for "American" or "store" cheese or just "cheese." That is to say, it is cheese which has been allowed to ripen naturally from the curd.

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The Bureau of Dairy Industry's cheese specialists invented a special can with a valve to keep outside air from coming in, but allow gases from the curing cheese to escape. The curing action goes on all the time the cheese is in the can. The freshly made curd is put right into the cans and held in them until it has ripened for a sufficient time. Then it goes to market, but it goes on ageing all the time until the consumer opens the can. Ageing of course improves the cheese.

Several manufacturers who have cooperated with the Bureau in producing canned cheese have welcomed the chance to label the small packages with their names and brands and so build up their reputations for a quality product. This labeling is an advantage to the purchaser when she finds a brand that suits her.

Another advantage to the manufacturer is that the cheese is ripened in the can in which it is sold. The cheesemaker is spared the expense of labor in the curing room and also the usual losses from shrinkage that go with the manufacture of bulk forms of cheese. The retailer is spared the work of cutting, weighing and wrapping small quantities for the purchaser.

The purchaser gets a cheese that can be eaten to the last crumb -- there's no rind, no mold to scrape away, and no waste, because the packages are of convenient size -- usually 12-ounce cans -- and may be purchased in advance of possible needs and held indefinitely without loss from drying out.

As to cost, apparently cheese buyers get just what they choose to pay for. When cheese is held long enough to age properly it of course costs more money than cheese held for only a short time. Cheddar type cheese which has ripened eight months to a year will have a waxy body and flavor which is still mild, but which has character -- the true Cheddar taste, due to the slow growth of a particular type of bacteria present.

The canned cheese costs little -- or no more, than the better ripened American Cheddar sold by the pound, because of the savings in manufacturing costs which I have mentioned. The whole process is finished in 36 hours after the factory gets the milk, except for ripening. Once the curd is in the cans, there's no more work to it.
